



ONE MINUTE SERIES #11

Dear First Responder, Medical & Mental Health Professional,

Scientists tell us that getting enough **sleep is integral to emotional wellbeing**, maintaining our **physical health, & being successful**. It is speculated that most people do not get enough sleep due to behavioral factors in our personal lives or our environment such as today's fast-paced society, **social media habits &** other influences. Other people struggle with diagnosable **sleep disorders** that prevent them from getting good sleep despite their best efforts and self-discipline.

Scholars decry sleep deprivation as a global health epidemic. Not getting enough sleep is associated with serious physical and mental health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attacks, low immune system, vehicular and work accidents, depression, stress, irritability, and more. For people already struggling with previous mental health challenges a lack of sleep can **intensify their struggle** and push them towards instability & **relapse**.

Experts urge us to **take our sleep seriously** and **prioritize adequate sleep** over other things. Sleep hygiene is a popular term which describes the practice of taking the right steps towards improving & maintaining one's sleep. **We can take practical steps today to improve our sleep** hygiene by learning and implementing well-known professional sleep tips such as maintaining a regular sleep schedule or avoiding caffeine before bedtime.

We can also take the steps towards learning more about general sleep health or making an appointment with an expert healthcare provider about our sleep challenges. There are many reputable professional organizations dedicated to **educating the public about sleep problems** and developing effective sleep habits, as well as expert physicians & psychotherapists that specialize in helping people overcome sleep problems **that were formed over many years**.

For those working shifts there is an accompanying risk of sleep problems that can arise. Here too, a competent sleep expert can be consulted to help mitigate **shift-induced sleep issues** and to develop counter habits and strategies to recover and maintain adequate sleep. First Responder managers and Hospital Administration professionals should be **encouraged to contact sleep experts** in order to know how to best arrange work shifts for their employees. Doing this potentially holds great benefits for both employees & employers alike.

Studies show that **sleep deprivation severely affects our basic cognitive abilities** and fine-motor skills. For example, researchers have found that certain levels of sleep deprivation affect a person in the same way that alcohol consumption does to impair a person from safely driving. Getting less sleep may allow for extra time to do necessary chores but at the risk of not producing quality work. Historians point to numerous **large-scale tragedies that they believe were the result of sleep deprivation**. Similarly, researchers point to a staggering number of **preventable deaths that were caused by sleep deprivation** among Surgeons.

When we tackle the obstacles that prevent us from getting quality sleep we are taking an active interest in our self-care. **Prioritizing our sleep and practicing excellent sleep hygiene** can help us live at our maximum performance emotionally & physically.